

My name is Jill Mays and I have lived in CT for over 40 years. I currently reside in Ridgefield with my husband.

I come wearing several hats tonight. First, I speak as a mother and grandparent. I am fortunate that my three children are grown and I didn't have to face the terrible responsibility of attempting to explain to little ones how a class of innocent first graders could be mowed down in the safety of their classroom. Sadly, my son, with a three year old, now carries that burden in this current American society.

I also speak as an advocate for children. As an Occupational therapist, I have worked with children and families for over 30 years. I have consulted in schools throughout Fairfield County and have recently published a book on the importance of outdoor unstructured play.

Sadly, in today's world, few children have the luxury of playing safely outside. While the illusion of safety was shattered for many in the suburbs this past December 14th, many parents have had to cope with dangerous environments and have not allowed their children to play outdoors, even in parks, for many years. Over 10 years ago, when I was co-president of Ridgefield ABC, one of our scholars hailed from the Bronx. She told me she was never allowed to play outside-EVER. Her mother wouldn't allow it due to the ongoing violence in the neighborhood. She said she faced danger walking to school every day.

In this culture of violence that now spills into the safe havens of suburbia, children no longer have the opportunity to explore the natural world so critical, as studies have shown, to healthy development. Even if a child chooses to unplug from

electronics and violent video games, innocence and healthy childhood play has been compromised.

My husband grew up in rural Pennsylvania. At 12 years old he received his first gun and had three by the time he was 16. He built a target range in his basement. While he has some of his fondest memories hunting with his beloved grandfather and Dad, he cannot fathom how a semiautomatic can qualify as a legitimate tool for hunters.

My husband and I urge you to reframe the conversation. This is not gun control, this is GUN SAFETY. Once we discovered that automobiles can be dangerous when handled incorrectly, over the years regulations have been put in place to safeguard the public at large. Statistics show that safety regulations led to a dramatic decrease in lost lives. Similarly, since Australia implemented commonsense safety regulations for guns, there has been a dramatic decrease in death by guns.

While the primary focus of tonight's discussion has focused on the safety of our children, as it should, I'd like to remind legislators that domestic violence with a gun in the home significantly increases the chance of a devastating outcome.

Owning a gun under the 2nd amendment is a right. We need to remember that being a citizen of the United States of America is a privilege and exercising our rights requires us to accept the responsibility for the good of all the people. Surely we can start by protecting our children and our homes from the unbearable violence we witnessed at Sandy Hook.

My husband I strongly support the following:

1. A ban on assault weapons and large magazines (including currently owned magazines)

2. Universal background checks
3. Better Mental Health services and Early childhood intervention
4. Long range look at our culture of violence.

I marched in DC this past weekend with the Million Mom's March and I will continue to March until these simple gun safety guidelines are put in place and we begin to make real changes to this cultural obsession with violence.